

Testimony in SUPPORT OF SB 227: AAC Cecil's Law

Submitted by Rosamund Downing,

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Dear Co-Chair Kennedy, Co-chair Albis, and Honorable members of the Environment Committee:

As a wildlife rehabilitator and voter in Connecticut, this issue is very important to me.

I strongly disapprove of trophy hunting, as do 86% of Americans. This issue gained national attention - and outrage - last summer when Cecil the lion was lured out of his home and shot with an arrow by a Minnesota dentist. The arrow shot was not immediately lethal, causing Cecil to suffer for several hours before ultimately dying. In fact, this is the fate of many wild animals because "crippling rates" are very high with bow hunting, regardless of the equipment used. Responding to public pressure, forty-five airlines have stopped transporting some or all types of hunting trophies!

Trophy hunters covet the "Africa Big Five" species, and between 2005 and 2014 a staggering 5,600 African lions, 4,600 African elephants, 4,500 African leopards, 330 southern white rhinos, and 17,200 African buffalo were imported into the U.S. All but the buffalo are considered endangered or threatened with extinction. Especially disturbing is the fact that trophy hunters prefer to kill the largest and strongest animals, usually males with the most impressive tusks, horns or manes. Unfortunately, these animals possess the best genes for survival and once killed, their superior genes are lost to future generations.

Trophy hunting is unethical and it certainly is NOT conservation. Many animals are killed in countries with widespread corruption that prevents money raised from trophy hunting from benefiting conservation efforts. For example, in 2014 and 2015, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service prohibited imports of African elephant trophies from Tanzania and Zimbabwe, citing questionable management practices, a lack of effective law enforcement, and weak governance.

Ensuring that no person imports, possesses, sells, offers for sale or transports in Connecticut any big five African species, will end Connecticut's role in the global slaughter of these irreplaceable species. Therefore, I urge you to support SB 227 ***and*** to refer to testimony by The Humane Society of the United States for suggested changes to current language that would strengthen this bill.

Thank you.